

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROGRAM

Archaeological Resources

Redstone Arsenal is located in an area with a high density of prehistoric archaeological sites. In addition, when the Army acquired the land, the government razed the small farmsteads, tenant farmer houses, share cropper houses, and the other structures associated with the rural farming communities that occupied the land. In doing so, the Army created hundreds of what today are classified by the Alabama Historic Preservation Office (ALSHPO) as historic archaeological sites.



Archaeological Crew digging a one-by-one test unit

Archaeological Sites: 715 to Date

PREHISTORIC

Recommended Eligible	262
Not Eligible	250

HISTORIC

Recommended Eligible	167
Not Eligible	130



Archaeological Crew Digging Trench and Screening Dirt

Prehistorical Era (10,500 B.C. – A.D. 1700)

The prehistoric sites on Redstone Arsenal date from the earliest time of human occupation, the Paleoindian (14,500 to 8000 B.C.) to the Mississippian (A.D. 1000-1700). The Redstone Point type (Paleoindian) was named after Redstone Arsenal, where it was recovered. The illustrated point is 110 mm in length and 34 mm wide at the base.



Redstone Point (Paleoindian Point)

Historical Era (1700- Present)

Historically, the area of north Alabama that is bounded by the Tennessee River was claimed by Spain, France, then England until the American Revolution. Native American cultures like the Chickasaw and Cherokee also claimed this land. However, with the organization of the Alabama Territory in 1817, Euro-American settlement increased. The area was included in the newly established State of Alabama in 1819. Throughout the nineteenth century in north Alabama, cotton was the primary vehicle of growth and the most profitable crop in the southern United States. The manpower required to operate this commerce was provided primarily by slaves, boosting Alabama's economy. During the Civil War, Huntsville functioned as a supply depot; therefore, it was a prime target for the Union troops, with the railroad as the main objective. After the Civil War, agriculture in the South assumed a new form. Instead of huge plantations, farmsteads dotted the landscape. By the end of the nineteenth century, textile mills began to make their mark across northern Alabama. Most of these mills were self-contained villages. In 1941, the army announced that Huntsville had been chosen as the site for the new ordnance plant. The army slowly purchased land throughout 1941 and 1942, and the installation eventually became known as Redstone Arsenal.

Ethnoarchaeology

Redstone Arsenal has initiated an ethnoarchaeological study designed to gain a holistic understanding of the cultural footprint of RSA land. This multi-disciplinary approach utilizes the data collected from archaeological surveys, ethnographic studies and oral histories, anthropological theory, documentary and archival research, and cultural resources management assessments. The results will enable a far deeper understanding of the histories of the sites than is provided by archaeological survey alone. Incorporation of the archival and ethnographic data with archaeological data from numerous sites can be used to construct not only the portrait of a specific site, but as the building blocks for the construction of a cultural landscape for a community or region. Finally, the use of anthropological theory for constructing site-type models from archaeological, ethnohistorical, and archival data allows sites to be grouped by type. Grouping sites by applying carefully constructed site-type models will allow the Cultural Resources Program to determine the historic archaeological sites of each type that are the most worthy of further archaeological testing (Phase II testing).

Redstone Arsenal is working closely with the State Archaeologist in developing a research model for the ethnoarchaeological study that will serve as the basis for proposing a programmatic agreement (PA) with the ALSHPO. It is hoped that this PA will allow RSA Cultural Resource Program to focus its funding on studying the sites on the installation with the most potential to yield valuable information,

while simultaneously clearing other sites from further research requirements and costly testing. This would: (1) free restrictions on many buildable and mission essential areas on the installation; (2) eliminate the long response time for Phase II testing; and (3) be completed at a fraction of the cost required for numerous Phase II investigations.

Please be advised that archeological sites on Redstone Arsenal, both prehistoric and historic, are protected properties. Vandalism or looting of these protected properties is a felony and punishable by fines, imprisonment, and confiscation of property.